



**Immediate Release: 9 July 2026**

**Statement from the Special Advocate  
in response to the decision by An Coimisiún Pleanála  
to grant planning permission for developments at  
Bessborough**

**The Special Advocate is shocked at the abhorrent decision today by An Coimisiún Pleanála not to overturn the decision to grant planning to the building of 140 apartments on grounds where 859 children's remains are disappeared.**

Despite two Appeals submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála, over 160 objections to the proposed development, and a huge wave of public, civic and political support on this matter in recent months, the decision to refuse to hold an oral hearing on a matter of such sensitivity and importance to Survivors and their families is shameful.

Patricia Carey said

***“It is critical that the Government intervene immediately and directly to stop this development proceeding and to work with Survivor groups to agree a plan to identify the locations of all disappeared children's remains and provide for dignified burial and memorialisation.”***

The Special Advocate supports calls for the Government to move to a Compulsory Purchase Order for the Bessborough site. The Special Advocate for Survivors calls for the immediate halt of any developments at Bessborough, and a programme of works to begin without any further delay to identify burial grounds of all those children and women buried on the institution's lands.

Of the 923 children who died in Bessborough, the burial records of only 64 of these children have been identified and located – this is an absolute disgrace.

The burial grounds at Bessborough have still not been identified, and with so many deceased children missing burial records, this can only be described as ‘*manifestly inappropriate*’.

The ongoing failure by the State to locate, identify and properly memorialise the burial site of children who died in Bessborough and other Mother and Baby institutions, is unacceptable.

This situation at Bessborough, and at other Mother and Baby Institutions across Ireland with unmarked graves, are causing immense pain and trauma to Survivors, Affected Persons and the family members of the deceased babies and children.

Dignified burial, the location of burial grounds and dignified memorialisation is one of the most frequently raised issues raised with the Special Advocate.



The differing levels of treatment concerning the identification, preservation and memorialisation of human remains across Mother and Baby Institutions across Ireland, has created an unfair Hierarchy of Abuse and Responses to Abuse for Survivors and their families.

A Human Rights approach to the Bessborough Mother and Baby Institution demands full State accountability for the deaths of over 900 babies and children, and action to ascertain the whereabouts of the disappeared and ensure dignified burial and memorialisation.

**The Special Advocate also calls for the unsealing and release of all reports and documents in the Mother and Baby Home Commission of Investigation Archive relating to the investigations on possible locations of human remains and all those disappeared at Bessborough, and any other institution, by Emergency Legislation if necessary.**

The Special Advocate recognises the decades of dedicated work by Survivors and Affected Persons, and Survivor Groups, on the need to identify, protect and properly memorialise the remains of the babies and children and adults disappeared across all institutions. **Over 9,000 babies and infants died in Mother and baby Institutions between 1922-1998.**

**ENDS**

**For interviews / comment please contact:**

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### **About the Special Advocate for Survivors**

The appointment of a Special Advocate for Survivors fulfils a core commitment in the Government's Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions, which contains a number of measures designed to address broader experiences of institutional trauma and forced family separation. This Action Plan recognises that the response of Government to the legacy of these institutions must be directly informed by the voices of those most centrally affected.

The Special Advocate's remit encompasses Mother and Baby Institutions, County Home Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, Industrial and Reformatory School Institutions, and related institutions, and those adopted, boarded out or the subject of an illegal birth registration.

The Special Advocate is operationally independent of Government.

The role of the Special Advocate for Survivors is to:

- ensure that the views of Survivors and Affected Persons are central to the delivery of the State's response to the legacy of institutional abuse and forced family separation
- promote the collective interests of Survivors and Affected Persons, as expressed by them, and amplify their voices as a central, essential input to Government deliberations on matters which affect them.

### **About Patricia Carey**

Patricia Carey has been in the role as Special Advocate for Survivors since 25 March 2024. Patricia Carey served as the CEO of the Adoption Authority of Ireland from 2014 to 2022, leading the Authority's work on the Birth Information and Tracing Act. Prior to this role she held the position of Director of Services for St Vincent De Paul, and has also held various volunteer leadership roles, including Chairperson of Connect Counselling for Survivors of Institutional Abuse and a founding member of Outhouse resource centre for the LGBT+ community. As an adopted person born in a Mother and Baby Institution, Patricia Carey brings a unique perspective and dedication to her work.